

Human Mental Processes

Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes and the factors that influence these processes.

Some early ideas about human thought and behaviour

The Greeks:

- Wondered why people had different personalities
- They developed the idea that each person's body had 4 fluids or humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile (choler) and black bile (melancholy)
- They believed that different combinations of these fluids caused different personality types.

Later people believed that thinking took place in the heart.

Hippocrates (460-377 BCE)

- Called the father of modern medicine
- Noticed that people with brain injuries acted differently from most people.
- Concluded that the brain was the source of our pleasures, joys, laughter, sorrow, pain, grief and tears.

John Locke (1643-1704)

- Said the mind receives information from the senses, turns this information into complex ideas in the brain, then draws conclusions
- Not until the late 1800's was modern psychology born.

6 Major Branches of Psychology:

1. Structuralism

- Founded by Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920)
- Set up the first psychology lab in Leipzig, Germany
- Tried to observe how the mind worked by doing experiments on sensation, perception and attention.
- Asked people to practice introspection-to examine their thoughts and describe everything that went through their mind.

2. Functionalism

- Founded by William James, American (1842-1910)
- Impressed with how people adapted their behaviour to the needs of their surroundings.

- Had read Charles Darwin's theory that human characteristics developed and adapted, allowing people to survive.
- Believed that people's mental characteristics developed to allow people to survive by solving problems.

3. Psychoanalysis

- Founded by Sigmund Freud (1865-1939)
- Practised Psychoanalysis-a process designed to uncover patients' unconscious thoughts by encouraging them to discuss their background, feelings and experiences with a trained psychologist.

4. Behaviourism

- Founded by John Watson (1878-1958)
- Believed that in order to be scientific, psychology should only study what can be observed-behaviour.
- The mind itself cannot be observed.
- Believe that our environment causes our behaviour.

5. Humanism

- Developed in the 1950's
- Believe that people can take control over their lives.
- Believe that people are not controlled by their drives and emotions (as psychoanalysis says).
- Believe that people are not controlled by their environment (as behaviourism says).

6. Cognitive Psychology

- Expanded in the 1950's
- The study of brain processes involved in memory, learning and thinking.
- Advances in computer technology helps to monitor brain activity.